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TITLE: Sexual Risk Behavior in Men Who Have Sex with Men: Statewide Gay Bar Surveys, Louisiana, 1995-1998

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BACKGROUND: Men who have sex with men (MSM) comprise the largest exposure category of persons with HIV. Successful treatment has increased the number of persons living with HIV, increasing the potential for spread. Highrisk sexual behavior in this group should be monitored and prevention efforts evaluated.

METHODS: As part of a statewide risk behavior surveillance system, periodic anonymous surveys were conducted in gay bars in Louisiana during 1995-1998. We analyzed data from 3,171 surveyed MSM.

RESULTS: Seventy two percent of MSM respondents had had more than one sex partner in the previous 12 months; 26% had practiced unprotected receptive anal sex in the previous 30 days. In a multivariate analysis that included crack/cocaine use, bar location, age, number of sex partners, year of survey, and race, unprotected receptive anal sex was independently associated only with crack/cocaine use (OR=2.5; 95% CI=1.1-3.4), being surveyed in New Orleans (OR=2.1; 95% CI=1.6-2.9), and younger age (OR=0.8 for 5 year increments; 95% CI=0.8-0.9). Of 2,309 (79%) MSM who knew their HIV status, 12% were HIV positive. Among HIV positive respondents who knew their partners' HIV status, 77% reported HIV negative partners; 19% of these men in discordant couples practiced unprotected *insertive* anal sex (during previous 30 days). Among HIV negative respondents, 17% reported HIV positive partners; 28% of these men in discordant couples practiced unprotected receptive anal sex (during previous 30 days).

CONCLUSIONS: MSM in Louisiana continue to engage in particularly highrisk sexual behavior; knowledge of HIV status did not substantially reduce risk behavior. Prevention efforts should target crack/cocaine use in MSM and younger MSM. Surveys in gay bars proved a useful method of risk behavior surveillance.

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